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FOREWORD

CODES of ethics are important agencies for social control. The complexities and the specializations of modern industrial life leave many individuals unable to judge whether or not a member of any profession has performed his services with due regard to the interests of all, as well as with due regard to the interests of his client. In all but the crassest and most obvious defaults in service standards the work of the physician must be judged by physicians and that of the lawyer, by lawyers. And so with each of the professions. The higher the skill, the greater the need for organized group effort toward maintaining a fine sense of obligations, not primarily to others in the same profession, but chiefly to the general well-being of all.

Hence it is that the ideal of all the professions is public service and not monetary gain. The very opportunities for anti-social conduct call forth organized effort to taboo unprofessional conduct. The constructive aim of each of the professions must therefore be the public good. The member of each of the professions has as his means of livelihood the heritage of the ages in his science. His earning power and his opportunity for immortality of influence depend upon the careful work of countless predecessors. The training necessary to a mastery of a profession gives the opportunity, but not the reason, for enforcing high standards of conduct throughout the profession.

Until very recently business was looked upon solely as a means to a selfish end. The ethics of business were those of the barter-market. The buyer could beware. The sole test of the seller was what he could get away with. But modern transportation systems have changed all this. Oranges grown in

California must now be marketed in Philadelphia and automobiles are now made in Detroit to be sold in the Orient. The manufacturer sells to distant unknown customers through advertising. Even contracts to buy and to sell, in these days of the telephone, are largely by word of mouth. Selling prices must now be announced before goods are produced. Business hangs more and more upon good faith. That old adage, "A man's word is as good as his bond," acquires new meaning as a business asset.

The necessity of good faith in business was brought forcibly to the attention of the business world by the unprecedented cancellation of contracts in the recent period of rapidly rising and falling prices. Business men learned then how little money it takes to tempt a man to break his word. But modern business cannot go on where there is lack of confidence. The sudden stagnation of business in 1920 was due more than men are wont to believe to the breakdown of moral stamina. Business is today far flung in its relations and complex in its ramifications. The structure falls when good faith fails.

In the past few months, many business men have come to have a solemn sense of personal obligation to restore and maintain faith in the business world. For ethics is the basis for creative industry. The National Association of Credit Men has adopted a formal code of ethics. (See page 208.) The Associated Advertising Clubs of the World has started a "Truth in Advertising" Movement and has formed a Vigilance Committee to enforce the truthful presentation of business facts in advertising. (See page 214.) The "Commercial Standards Council" was federated out of many large busi-

ness associations to suppress bribery and to secure better ethical standards in business. (See page 221.) The Rotarians, under the poignant leadership of Mr. Guy Gundaker, have set for themselves the gigantic yet inspiring task of creating a code of ethics in every craft and business group throughout the country. (See page 229.) And even the editors of newspapers have assumed responsibility for a public profession as to their standards of conduct. (See pp. 170 to 179.)

As business groups and crafts struggle to put into words the ideals that shall guide their members when meeting the business temptations peculiar to each craft or industry, they, too, must turn away from mere negations to the ideal. And this ideal, as with the professions, must be the public good. These business groups, however, will not find at hand the same means for enforcing high standards of conduct that the professions have. There will usually be no selective training for the work performed, though the demand for such training is increasing. (See page 205.) But, on the other hand, business groups will have the powerful controlling agency of the organized market.

The business world is now so complex that reliance must be its first watchword. And this can never be until the ideal of service controls the crafty impulse for profits. Confidence can never be established merely by preventing the illegal. Laws must by their very nature be the expression of accepted standards of conduct. Unless those standards are generally accepted, laws can be of no avail. For laws enforce the obedience of minorities only. The professions of law and of medicine will never entice the public confidence if the members of those professions organize solely to punish the lawbreaker. The physician, to be worthy of his profession, must do more than refuse to do the

illegal act. He must do his share to prevent disease, even though by so doing he shall decrease the need for physicians. The unethical and the illegal are not synonymous. The ethical points to the goal. The illegal leads only to the jail. The unethical is the path in the mud. The ethical is the paved road to public service. Ethics like all paved roads are the result of conscious, persistent, human effort.

One danger to the general good lurks in group codes, and that is that the code may degenerate into the creed of a "make-work" union. We have heard much of late about wage earners making work for each other and not pushing their own jobs to a finish. We have been prone to forget that the same disease has long been chronic among some members of the legal profession. We have scolded the wage earners for standing together when many physicians have long practised all the arts of mutual protection. Unless the ancient self-seeking by individuals is to become, under the modern necessity for organization, mere self-seeking by groups, codes of ethics must keep clearly in mind at all times the good of all. If chambers of commerce may dominate the legislature of Pennsylvania, why may not the farmers dominate the national Congress? If lawyers are to make work for each other, how are we to say that laborers shall not soldier on their jobs? Self-determination by groups there should be; but self-determination in the light of the good of all.

One aspect of group consciousness of late is the belief of each of the professions that it alone should inherit the earth. Engineers have recently claimed that engineering is the one all-inclusive industrial profession. The farmers have long known that the farm is the beginning and the end of all industry. Ministers have solemnly assured their

hearers that the ministry is the highest of all callings while the contempt of lawyers for the skill or knowledge of others has been chronic. And who has not been told that labor produces all goods and who else ever can be "practical" but the business man? In so far as this group-smugness is born of a conviction of the dignity and social value of one's calling, such a feeling will have social value. But in so far as it is indicative of group-selfishness, we must find an antidote for it.

And that antidote has been suggested in the Interprofessional Conference. Such a Conference was held in Detroit in 1919. The purpose of that Conference (see page 13) was "to liberate the professions from the domination of selfish interest, both within and without the professions, to devise ways and means of better utilizing the professional heritage and skill for the benefit of society and to create relations between the professions looking toward

that end." The Congress of the Building Industry, formed in this country, is fraught with such possibilities. Mr. Hoover's Unemployment Conference created in the minds of its most selfish members an impulse to do one's duty toward others. Such congresses where one may learn of the needs and points of view of others will tend to transmute group-selfishness into group-ideals of public service. The public weal is a joint product of the loyal services of the skill, knowledge and creative ability of all. Useless one group or profession without the other.

Codes of ethics are the means by which groups keep their members socially victorious over self-aggrandizement. To survive, such codes must achieve a unity not of negation but of spirit—a spirit that consecrates life to the long-time interests of all through one's efforts while making a living.

CLYDE L. KING,
Editor.